

NSC BRIEFING

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BACKGROUND NOTE ON NAI KHUANG APHAIWONG

1. Former Thai premier Nai Khuang Aphaiwong, leader of the conservative Democratic Party, is widely respected in Thailand but of little significance under present political conditions. He has remained quietly in the background since Sarit's suppression of political parties in late October.

2. Khuang and his associates, who advocate a Western-style democracy for Thailand, fear that the police round-up of political oppositionists, thus far restricted to leftists and alleged Communist elements, may be extended to them. The military in fact have found Khuang useful in the past as an essentially powerless opposition leader who nevertheless gave some moral tone to the otherwise shabby spectacle of Bangkok politics.

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4. Sarit's overthrow of the constitution and suppression of political parties were crushing blows to Khuang's political aspirations. In the two elections held since the Sarit group of September 1957, his party scored striking successes; and if the ruling military group had continued to allow normal democratic processes to operate, his party would have had every hope of eventually being returned to power.